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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 NIAMEY 000618

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SUBJECT: NIGER: DIPLOMATIC CORPS ATTENDANCE THIN AT THE  
PRIME MINISTER'S SWEARING IN CEREMONY FOR THE SIX REPUBLIC;  
OPPOSITION CONTINUES TO CHALLENGE NEW CONSTITUTION AS  
PROTESTS MEET VIOLENT POLICE RESPONSE

REF: A. NIAMEY 611

[B](#). NIAMEY 609

[C](#). NIAMEY 599

[D](#). NIAMEY 596

[E](#). NIAMEY 584

[F](#). NIAMEY 378

NIAMEY 00000618 001.2 OF 002

[1](#). Summary. Government of Niger (GON) President Mamadou Tandja presided over an August 21 swearing-in ceremony to install Prime Minister Seini Oumarou for the Sixth Republic of Niger (ref a). The GON extended invitations to the diplomatic corps and international organization senior representatives, but attendance was thin. Despite the GON's ban of an opposition rally on August 22, the latter defied the GON's decision and confronted police. The Coordination of Forces for Democracy and the Republic (CFDR), an opposition coalition of political parties, civil society organizations and labor unions, continues to challenge the controversial constitution enacted by President Tandja (ref C) via a series of activities in order to denounce "the coup that he perpetrated." End summary.

[2](#). The August 21 swearing-in ceremony for Prime Minister Seini Oumarou was broadcast on state television, Tele-Sahel. In attendance were GON officials (cabinet members, leaders of GON institutions) and a thin representation of the diplomatic corps and international organizations. Only four embassies (Algeria, Libya, France and Benin), including the Algerian and Libyan ambassadors and charges d'affaires for France (the Ambassador has been out of the country on R&R) and Benin, and three IOs were present at the ceremony;

[3](#). On August 22, in Niamey, CFDR attempted to conduct a rally before the National Assembly in protest of the new constitution in spite of the municipal authorities' ban, but the police forces deployed across the city prevented the gathering. When the protesters tried to reassemble at another venue, the police used teargas and batons to disperse the crowd and made several arrests. The confrontation between demonstrators and the police, and the reported manhunt engaged by the latter, lasted several hours. Similar demonstrations were held in other regions of the country, also resulting in violence and leading to several arrests.

Overall, based on Embassy staff inquiries and observations, the collective number of protesters in Niamey and other regions amounted to less than 1500, with no locale reaching numbers above 500. Total number of arrests reported to date in Niamey and the other regions of the country amount to 41; Niamey (16), Tahoua (14) and Tillabery (11). Among those arrested were former member of parliament Soumana Sanda, a staunch supporter of former Prime Minister Hama Amadou, and Mamane Wada, Secretary General of the Nigerien Association for the Fight Against Corruption (Niger's chapter of Transparency International), who is also Secretary General of the United Front for the Protection of Democratic Gains (FUSAD, the movement led by jailed activist Marou Amadou (ref e). In other locales, reportedly the police arrived at the rally points before protesters and prevented the demonstrations from taking place.

14. On August 24, the CFDR held a town hall meeting during which it took a resolution to reinstate the National Assembly that was dissolved last May (ref f) "due to President Tandja's failure to organize legislative elections within ninety days as mandated by the Constitution." The CFDR reported that the government had arrested or jailed 150 opposition members since the beginning of the protests against the referendum for a new constitution. According to the CFDR as of August 24, fifty-four (54) opposition members are detained in prison or in police custody. The CFDR indicated that this is evidence that "Tandja's regime can sustain itself only through violence... but this will be a short-lived situation" because the opposition will continue fighting until it restores democracy. About fifty (50) former parliamentarians from the dissolved National Assembly participated in the town hall meeting. Mahamadou Issoufou, the opposition leader, said, "No violence, no repression, no

NIAMEY 00000618 002.2 OF 002

intimidation can stop the CFDR's resolve to fight (Tandja's) autocratic moves." Issoufou stated that Tandja would be held responsible for the deterioration of the country's stability and for any sanctions against the Republic of Niger. He further called for the release of all those detained.

15. The CFDR does not appear to have the capability to reinstate the dissolved National Assembly, consequently its decision can only be interpreted as a symbolic gesture with the hope of attracting national and international attention on Niger's political environment.

16. The Inter-Union of Niger's Workers (ITN), a coalition of the country's seven trade union confederations, called a strike for the period of August 26-28 in order to press the GON to address the following claims: the implementation of the March 2009 agreement between the GON and labor unions; 50 percent reduction of income tax on salaries and benefits; 50 percent increase on salaries and pensions; employment for all young graduates; and creation of a health union for government workers. (Comment: To date, unions' calls for strikes have not produced large-scale participation and, during the Ramadan period, the ability to rally members may prove even more challenging. End comment.)

17. ITN is a member of the CFDR. When asked whether the unions' claims are linked to the current political context, leaders responded that their strike was indirectly related to the political situation because the new Constitution provides for new institutions (e.g., the Senate, the Council of Youth, the Council of Traditional Chiefs) that require a budget and other resources; therefore it appears the GON has resources to effect salary increases in order to improve workers' living conditions.

(Note: The ECOWAS opened a ministerial meeting on Niger in Abuja, Nigeria. Several rights activists and other advocates have traveled to Abuja to press the meeting attendees to adopt constraining sanctions against the Republic of Niger.

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